

Multiple Disabilities

What are Multiple Disabilities?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) § 15-761(17), " 'Multiple disabilities' means learning and developmental problems resulting from multiple disabilities as determined by evaluation... that cannot be provided for adequately in a program designed to meet the needs of children with less complex disabilities. Multiple disabilities include any of the following conditions that require the provision of special education and related services:

- (a) Two or more of the following conditions
 - (i) Hearing impairment.
 - (ii) Orthopedic Impairment.
 - (iii) Moderate mental retardation.
 - (iv) Visual impairment.

(b) A child with a disability listed in subdivision (a) of this paragraph existing concurrently with a condition of mild mental retardation, emotional disability or specific learning disability."

In addition, the Arizona Revised Statutes, § 15-761(18) notes " 'Multiple disabilities with severe sensory impairment' means multiple disabilities that include at least one of the following:

- (a) Severe visual impairment or severe hearing impairment in combination with another severe disability.
- (b) Severe visual impairment and severe hearing impairment."

Severe and/or multiple disabilities are terms used to describe the often intense and complex combinations of medical, physical, developmental, and/or behavioral characteristics an individual might have.

How Common are Multiple Disabilities?

In the 2002-03 school year, 2,624 Arizona students were classified as having multiple disabilities (MD) or multiple disabilities with severe sensory impairments (MDSSI) and received special education services. This number represents 0.29 percent of the

912,083 children enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2002.

What Effect Do Multiple Disabilities Have on a Child?

Depending on the type and severity of a child's disabilities, he or she will most likely require on-going support in more than one major life skill area. A team of educators and therapists will work closely with the student and his/her family to plan a successful educational program. The individualized program will include a variety of supports to meet the student's educational, language, social, vocational, and functional skill development. Accommodations for medication schedules, special diets and adaptive equipment may be included.

An important part of the evaluation process is consideration of Assistive Technology (AT) services. AT can include a wide-range of options from low-technology pictorial schedules and assignments to high-technology communication boards or computers.

The individual with multiple disabilities can engage in a wide variety of useful and satisfying activities in school, the community and workplace. Community-based instruction is an important part of the older student's IEP and includes transition planning for post-school work, living arrangements, managing health care, recreation and leisure activities, daily living skills and self-determination.

References

- Heward, W. L. & Orlansky, M. D. (1999). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Publishing Co.
- National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. (2000). *General information about severe and/or multiple disabilities, Fact Sheet #10*. Washington, DC: NICHCY.

Downing, J. E. (2002). *Including students with severe and multiple disabilities in typical classrooms: Practical strategies for teachers*. 2nd Edition. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, www.pbrookes.com

Holburn, S. and Vietze, P. editors (2002). *Person-Centered Care Planning: Research, practice and future directions*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, www.pbrookes.com

Silverlining Multimedia. (2001). *Picture This... CD Rom*. (photos for picture schedules, communication boards, etc.) Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, woodbinehouse.com

Video Tapes

PLAI (Promoting Learning Through Active Interaction) A Guide to Early Communication with Young Children Who Have Multiple Disabilities, Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing, www.pbrookes.com

Disabilities List of Resources. Child Development Media, Inc., 5632 Van Nuys Blvd., #286, Van Nuys, CA 91401, (818) 994-0933, www.childdevelopmentmedia.com

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

The Arc of Arizona, 5610 S. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85040, 602-243-1787 or 800-252-9054, www.arcarizona.org

Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities, 1789 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85005-6123, 602-542-0419, 866-229-5553 www.de.state.az.us/ddd

Arizona State School for the Deaf and the Blind, www.asdb.state.az.us
1200 W. Speedway, P.O. Box 85000, Tucson, AZ 85754-5000, 520-770-3683
1000 E. Butler, #115, Flagstaff, AZ 86004, 928-774-0655

DB-LINK (DeafBlind), 345 N. Monmouth Ave,

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Monmouth, OR, 97361, 800-438-9376, www.tr.wou.edu/dblink

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN), www.ade.az.gov/ess/eapn

National Federation of the Blind of Arizona 2624 N. Terrace St., Mesa, AZ 85203, 480-898-1188, www.nfbarizona.com

National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD), P.O. Box 1968, Danbury, CT 06812-8923, 800-999-6673, www.rarediseases.org

Office for Children with Special Health Care Needs (OCSHCN), AZ Department of Health Services, 150 N. 18th Ave. Suite 330, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-542-1001, www.hs.state.az.us/phs/ocshcn

Parent Information Network, Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558, www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150 or 877-365 7220, www.pilotparents.org

Raising Special Kids, 2400 N. Central, Ste. 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-242-4366 or 800-237-3007, www.raisingpecialkids.org

Special Olympics Arizona, 3816 N. 7th St., Phoenix, AZ 85014-5004, 602-230-1200, www.specialolympicsarizona.org

TASH (The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps), Janet Holt, Paradise Valley USD, 3540 E. Cholla, Phoenix, AZ 85028, 602-493-6260, www.tash.org

United Cerebral Palsy, www.ucpsa.org
Central AZ, Inc., 321 Hatcher St., #102
Phoenix, AZ 85021, 602-943-5472
Southern Arizona, Inc. 3941 E. 29th St., Suite #601, Tucson, AZ, 85711, 520-795-3108